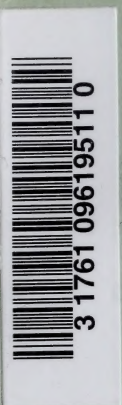


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CARDINAL GASQUET



GREAT BRITAIN AND THE HOLY SEE

1792-1806



A CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY
OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS
BETWEEN ENGLAND AND
ROME.

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TO THE READER

The following pages give a brief *résumé* of some documents regarding diplomatic relations between Great Britain and Rome, hitherto practically unknown. They relate to the period of the Napoleonic wars, between 1792 and 1806, and will be found full of interest to the student of this period of our history. A general history of the relations of England to the Pope, would be a subject to repay the student who would undertake it. The present study of twelve years, during the reign of George III of England and the pontificates of Popes Pius VI and Pius VII, may be considered as forming one chapter of such a history.

Some few words will be useful in giving the reader the necessary «setting» to appreciate fully the papers here referred to. The French Republic was proclaimed, on September 2, 1792, and immediately the national Convention gave its sanction to the massacre of hundreds of people in Paris and elsewhere. In England the news of these horrors at once cleared up any doubts as to the character of the French Revolution, and ranged the country in opposition to the Republicans. On February 8, 1793, the great war, which was destined to last till July 7, 1815, began.

The naval supremacy of England enabled it at once to seize the outlying French colonies, and its fleets proceeded to blockade Brest, Toulon and Rochefort. In the summer of 1794 the Brest squadron of the French navy put sea to convoy a merchant fleet, but was caught and beaten by Lord Howe on «the glorious First of June». On the other hand the English suffered a reverse at

Toulon, which the Royalist inhabitants of the town had handed over to the English. On 20 November 1793, Lord Hood, commanding the British fleet in the Mediterranean, Sir Gilbert Elliot and Lord O'Hara took over the administration, until such time as the monarchy should be re-established in France, and the copy of the « Discourse » pronounced on this occasion by these Plenipotentiaries, was forwarded to Rome for the information of Pope Pius VI, and is among the papers here summarized. General Lord O'Hara, who defended the place, was obliged to retire after a short siege, and Toulon fell back into the hands of the Republicans. Before retiring, the English were able to destroy the French fleet and arsenal.

The loss of the harbour, however, was a serious matter for the English ships in the Mediterranean, and rendered it all the more imperative for the Government to cultivate the friendship of the Pope, so as to find in the ports of the Papal States, places where the English ships might refit and obtain supplies. In 1796, Spain declared war upon England, and joined France, the Dutch fleet having previously joined against the English. In this same year, the Directory made Napoleon Bonaparte commander of the army in Italy, and in two campaigns he overran the Austrian and Sardinian possessions in the valley of the Po, and continuing his progress over the Alps, attacked Austria from the South. This obliged the Emperor to sue for peace, which he obtained by surrendering Belgium and Lombardy to France. The latter possession gave Napoleon the power of making further advances into Tuscany and the States of the Church. Finally, in the refusal of the Pope to expel the English from his dominions and close his ports to English ships, Napoleon found the excuse for invading the papal territories. With these few facts to act as a « setting » the following pages may be left to tell their own story.

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE HOLY SEE

1792-1806.

A chapter in the history of diplomatic relations between England and Rome.

It would probably astonish most people to hear that diplomatic relations between England and the Holy See existed at the close of the 18th century. The fact of the mission of Mgr Erskine to the Court of St James in 1793 is of course known, and in part it has been described by Mazière Brady in his interesting *Memoirs of Cardinal Erskine, Papal Envoy to the Court of George III*,¹ but the real origin of the mission and that of a corresponding one to Rome, appears to be generally unknown. Lately, whilst arranging some papers of this period in the Vatican Archives, the letters of Mgr Erskine from London and of the English agent at Rome have come to light; and, as they contain many matters of historical interest, it appears worth while to give some account of them.

It would seem that, some time in the first half of the year 1792, the English Government found it necessary to open official communications with Pope Pius VI regarding the political situation which had arisen in consequence of the war with the French Republicans. For this purpose it made choice of Mr. afterwards Sir John Hippisley, who had proved himself a valuable public servant in India and who had already, whilst residing in Italy in 1779 and 1780, been entrusted with several confidential communications in Rome and elsewhere.

The *Dictionary of National Biography* says: « From 1792 to 1796 he (Hippisley) resided in Italy and was there again engaged

¹ In a volume entitled « *Anglo-Roman Papers* », 1890.

in negotiations with the Vatican, the effects of which were acknowledged in flattering terms by the English Government ». This apparently is all that has been known hitherto of his mission to the Holy See, but his position in Rome was undoubtedly one of great influence both with the Vatican authorities and with the most prominent members of the English Government. He was, for instance, in constant correspondence with the Secretary of State, Cardinal De Zelada, and more especially with Cardinal Campanelli, the pro-Datary, who was not only highly esteemed by Pius VI, but at this particular time assisted the Secretary of State in the transaction of business.

After having passed the greater part of the year 1792 in surveying the general situation, Hippisley, who was not himself a Catholic, came to the conclusion that the best interests of England would be served by having a Papal Envoy in London. It seemed to him a plain matter of political utility if not a necessity for his country, that relations should be established between the Pope and the English Government. It was a time when no religious prejudices should be allowed to prevent cordial cooperation between two powers with so many interests in common. The presence of English ships of war in the Mediterranean was rendered necessary by the operations undertaken against France, and this required the free use of the ports belonging to the Papal States for refuge, refitting and revictualling.

On this important matter he sounded his chiefs in the Government and found them entirely sympathetic, but timorous of the existing Protestant bigotry in England. Nevertheless from the general encouragement he received from men like Pitt and Windham, he decided to try and bring about the appointment of an Envoy from the Pope, and, whilst warning his friends at the Vatican of a possible popular outcry at home at the arrival of any Papal agent, he did all in his power to get them to risk the appointment. Circumstances favoured the project. Mazière Brady states that the Pope employed a certain « Mr Jenkins, then living in Rome as British Consul or Agent » to make the first proposals for the projected mission. This is not the case and, as far as appears

from the documents, Mr Jenkins had nothing to do in the matter. In fact, it seems from the existing papers that Mr Jenkins, who was an English banker living in Rome, was a rather tiresome person at this time. He was involved in complaints made by the papal authorities of having assisted some Englishmen to evade the law against removing antiquities or works of art from Italy, also in 1793 he had tried to make some money by raising a loan for the city of Toulon, which at Mr Hippisley's demand was prohibited both by the Papal and the English Governments. There can be little doubt therefore that this Mr Jenkins had nothing to do with the project of sending the Roman Envoy to London, whilst Mr Hippisley's letters show that the project was conceived and carried out by him. Subsequently, too, he was in constant communication with Mgr Erskine, who was chosen for the office.

There were some people, however, who had vague fears of the bold step about to be taken by the Vatican. One Englishman, for example, a certain Joseph Denham, wrote from Onano, a village near Viterbo, to Cardinal De Zelada, the Secretary of State, to implore the Pope to desist. He said that he was a Catholic and that he feared there would be a great outbreak of Protestant prejudice against the Catholics in England, if it became known that an Envoy had been sent thither from the Pope of Rome.

The Holy Father, however, rightly gauged the situation. The French Revolution had already displayed its principles and ferocity, and the massacres of September 2nd and 3rd, 1792 in Paris, followed as they were in France generally by like horrors, showed that the only hope for the upper classes lay in emigration. Nobles, Bishops and Clergy of every grade took refuge in England, which offered a compassionate welcome to all, including many thousands of Catholic priests. Pius VI was persuaded by Hippisley to utilize this generous feeling displayed by the Protestants of England and made choice of Mgr Erskine for the mission of expressing his personal gratitude.

This Prelate was eminently fitted for carrying out his difficult and delicate task. He was a Scotchman and a close relative of the Earl of Kellie and the Earl of Mar. Whilst still very young he

had been taken under the protection of the Cardinal Duke of York and placed by him in the Scots College at Rome, where he remained from 1748 to 1753. Erskine then took up the study of Law and his career in that profession was brilliant. He was still a layman, when in 1782 Pius VI appointed him *Pro-Uditore* and then *Promotore della Fede*. The following year he received Minor Orders in St Peter's from the hands of the Cardinal of York, and later in the same year was ordained sub-deacon.

On October 4, 1793 Monsignor Erskine set out on his mission to England. In a general way it was supposed that his journey was in part dictated by a desire to visit his Scotch relatives. But the way had been carefully prepared by Hippisley, who, although not without some fear of difficulties arising from the Protestant temperament of the English, had the best possible reasons for expecting that with moderate prudence serious objections to the Mission would not be raised.

At the very time when Erskine was setting out, the English Government were urging their Envoy in Rome to press upon the Pope the necessity of actively supporting the British resistance to the Republicans. At the beginning of October, the English Minister at Turin wrote to urge the Pope to send pontifical troops to assist the English in the defence of Toulon; and on the 17th of that month, the Cardinal Secretary of State informed Mr. Hippisley that he feared the number of troops at the disposal of His Holiness was altogether too small to enable him to send the number of men (4000) asked for; especially as he had to try and find troops to defend Avignon and Venaissin against the republican. Still, the Cardinal Secretary adds, the Pope would gladly help the English if he possibly could, and he had summoned the « Cardinals of the Congregation of State » to discuss the matter.

Meanwhile Erskine was travelling towards England. On November 7 Hippisley wrote to Lord Hood, Commander of the English fleet at Toulon, about the loan proposed by Mr Jenkins. The papal authorities, he says, cannot encourage the project, as the financial condition of the Papal States is very bad. He

adds: « the disposition of the Pope's Government is excellent. It desires to contribute in every possible manner to the success of the common cause of England and Rome ».

On 20 November of this year, 1793, Hippisley had the first news of Erskine, written from Holland. In this letter the Envoy tells him that he hears indirectly from the Lord Chancellor of England, that he will be welcomed by the Government of the country. In communicating this fact to the Vatican authorities, Mr Hippisley tells the Cardinal Secretary of State that he thinks it would be well if the Pope were to prepare the Catholic Bishops of England and Ireland for the advent of his representative, as he has some reason to suppose that they may not like the presence of an Envoy in London. The best way would be for the Holy Father to ask them to assist Mgr Erskine in every way, and he ventures to enclose the draft of a letter which would be most useful for him to send.

Three days later Hippisley informs the Cardinal Secretary of a letter from London, which he is sure will be read with pleasure by the Pope. The « great and powerful Mr Burke » writes: « If the thing depended on me I should certainly enter upon diplomatic correspondence with the Court of Rome, in a much more open and legitimate manner than has been hitherto attempted. If we refuse it, the bigotry will be on our side and most certainly not on that of His Holiness. Our unnatural alienation has produced, I am convinced, great evil and prevented much good. If the present state of the world does not make us learn something, our error is much more culpable. This excellent correspondence (between Rome and England) could not begin more fortunately than under the present sovereign Pontiff, who unites in his person the kingly and priestly office with advantage to both the one and the other, and giving to each a new lustre. Truly he is a Pontiff, whose dignity as Prince takes nothing from his dignity as a Priest, and whose sweet condescension is everything proper to a Christian Bishop. Far from weakening in him the imposing and majestic authority of a temporal sovereign it gives him on the contrary an additional force and a greater *éclat* ».

Together with this letter from Edmund Burke, Mr Hippisley sends an extract from another letter to the same effect, received from the Anglican Bishop of Winchester, whom he describes as « brother of Lord North, lately the Prime Minister of England ». This Prelate of the Anglican Church writes: « The establishment of relations between Great Britain and the Pope is most desirable, especially at a time when the piety, humility and liberality of Pius VI presents him to us as a Prince whose friendship is an honour and whose political or private engagements are characterized by virtue, sincerity and goodness of heart ».

At this time an interesting memorandum for the information of the Cardinal Secretary of State and the pro-Datary, was handed to them by the English agent, to explain all that he had done to prepare the way for the mission of Mgr Erskine the Pope's Envoy, to England. He marks the document as « secret » and begs that it may be returned to him after it has been read; but fortunately, perhaps, for the history of this time, it still remains among the Hippisley papers in the Vatican archives, and a few extracts from it may be permitted. « Once the mission of Mgr Erskine had been determined upon », he writes, « I took every measure possible to anticipate any difficulties which might arise.

« The first and the greatest obstacle, which could be foreseen, was the prejudice of the lower classes of the people in general and of the sectaries in particular. In order to manifest the favourable dispositions of His Holiness to the English Government, I proposed the publication of His Holiness' letter to the Bishop of St Pol de Leon, and the President of the committee of the *émigrés* in England was informed of my motive.

« Another object, equally necessary, was to give the English people generally the knowledge that His Holiness desired to instruct the Prelates of his displeasure at hearing that some of the lower classes among the Roman Catholics had allowed themselves to be seduced by evil minded people, and had been drawn away from their duty *to their Sovereign*.

« I forewarned all my friends in England on this matter and even wrote personally and in great detail to His Highness the

Prince of Wales, Prince Augustus, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Grenville, Mr Windham, Mr Burke and to many other members of Parliament ».

The writer then goes on to say that he fears that real intrigues and opposition to the presence in England of a papal representative will emanate from the Catholics themselves, and in particular from the Bishops, who thought they saw in this Envoy of the Pope a new authority imposed upon them. Even in Mr Burke's communications, Hippisley is inclined to read in some places fears as to the reception which will be accorded to Mgr Erskine, although he (i. e. Burke) is quite explicit as to his own view about the great utility of the mission.

« By the last courier », he adds, « Lord Grenville has written as follows: - It seems only right to take this opportunity of thanking you (Hippisley) personally for your efforts to serve the public cause (in all this). The consequence of measures you have taken so wisely on this important matter I am satisfied will be a very essential advantage to His Majesty's service. -

« More than two months back », continues Hippisley, « I wrote to Lord Petre, the chief of the English Catholics upon this subject, and sent him copies of His Holiness' letters to the Bishop of St Pol de Leon, and the circular to the Irish Bishops. Although I am in excellent relations with Lord Petre, I have up to the present not had any reply from him, but Mr Wilmot, President of the Committee *des Emigrés*, writes to me saying that the Bishop of St Pol de Leon does not think the time altogether favourable for the immediate publication of the letter to him.

« To understand the situation it must be remembered that some time ago Mgr Douglas (the Vicar Apostolic of the London District) wrote to his agent in Rome saying that the English Government would be quite content if he (the Bishop) were named the papal representative. Moreover this agent of the Vicar Apostolic told Mr Canning, a Catholic gentleman (then in Rome) that should the Pope send any other Prelate with a commission to England, this would be doing a great wrong to Mgr Douglas (who was in reality the existing papal agent to England). The same represent-

ative of Mgr Douglas told me (Hippisley), only the other day, that Mgr Erskine would most certainly not be received (in England) and that the Irish had threatened to hang him if he dared to set his foot in Ireland. - Why, - they say, - send us a little lawyer to meddle in the affairs of our Bishops? ».

Hippisley then declares that it is his belief that the lower classes must have been put up to this, « otherwise how could they have known about the intended mission and even the name of Mgr Erskine? » Having communicated his fears on this matter to Lord Hood, the Admiral commanding the British fleet in the Mediterranean, he replied on October 7, making the following reflection: « One must certainly complain when one has to do with people who can only see their own private interests, without regarding the evil consequence which result to the public service ».

Still, notwithstanding the obstacles that have been raised to the mission of Mgr Erskine, Hippisley repeats his entire confidence that they will be surmounted successfully and that « the fears of the English Ministers will be dissipated even before the meeting of Parliament ».

As a result of this exposition of the situation, in December a letter was written from Propaganda to the Vicar Apostolic of the London District and to the Archbishop of Dublin. In these letters the Bishops are asked to assist Mgr Erskine in every possible way. The Cardinal Prefect expresses his fears that attempts have been made to injure the Pope's Envoy and to poison the minds of the Bishops against him, on the ground that his mission would clash with their rights and diminish their position. How absurd and false such a suggestion is, the letters say: « you may know from the words of the document, and from your experience of the way in which the Holy Father is always prompt to uphold and safeguard the dignity of the Bishops ». By the Pope's direction a copy of this letter was given to Mr Hippisley in order that any doubt about the Holy See not supporting the mission might not be entertained for a moment.

On 17 December 1793, a copy of an interesting letter from Lord Hood was communicated by Hippisley to the Cardinal Secretary of State:

« On board the Victory, 8 November 1793.

« I received to-day the letters with which you obligingly honoured me, dated 23 and 24 of this month. They contained all the papers joined to them and the two packets of documents concerning Avignon, which the Cardinal Secretary of State had given you.

« I beg you to oblige me by assuring His Eminence that I will give all my attention to them and that I should esteem myself most happy if I could assist in any way to realise the desires of the *bon Pape*, whose character I revere and for whom I have the highest esteem. I have no doubt that Mgr Erskine will be well received in England and that the representations and just demands of His Holiness as to Avignon may be favourably received ».

A letter sent from the English agent in Rome to Lord Hood, dated 18 December 1793, comes next in order in these Hippisley papers. « I acquainted Your Excellency a long time ago », he writes, « of the project of sending some troops to Avignon. ... Mr Jenkins has just presented to the Cardinal Secretary a memoir, which has proved under the circumstances most embarrassing to the Pope, who is sincerely desirous on the one hand, to give every possible proof of his zeal in the common cause, and on the other is being obliged to give the greatest possible attention to whatever the present position of his own States demands of him.

« When some months ago I spoke to the Cardinal Secretary of State about troops (being required), my ideas turned on the sending of two or three thousand men to preserve and defend Avignon, once already taken, rather than to act in any offensive measures, this appearing to me more in accord to the spirit which directs an ecclesiastical Sovereign like the Pope. It was very doubtful whether it would be possible to take some of these troops, which were newly called to arms, little trained and little disciplined; but the goodwill of the Pope was evident.

« The position of the States of the Church has since become, especially in this moment, very critical. The high cost of food and of corn in particular, is causing a great sensation among the people and excites their complaints. Three days ago, for example, at Albano, a city only four leagues from Rome, there was a kind of bread riot and they were obliged to send troops there ... ».

At this time - December 1793 - Hippisley had considerable difficulties with the same Mr Jenkins - « a mere merchant of rings and marbles », as he calls him, to whom reference has already been made. Owing to the meddling of this gentleman, Hippisley thought it necessary to state his own exact position as British agent, in a letter to the Cardinal Secretary of State. « It was I », he writes « who first dared to propose to the English ministry the opening up of political communications with the Court of Rome. In spite of the penal laws I openly took the initiative with our Government and persuaded them that this proposal would be of great benefit to my country: I did not fear to take the entire responsibility. Your Eminence knows that my conduct has been approved and that I have received the thanks of the English ministry. The English ministers at the only two courts in Italy, which are allied to Great Britain, have many times expressed their high appreciation of what I have done. Indeed Sir William; Hamilton, the Minister at Naples, writes: - You have had a very wise thought when you took upon yourself to open a correspondence with His Holiness. - Mr Trevor our Minister at Turin says: - Your country cannot but be infinitely obliged to you, for what you have done at Rome; the firmness and dignity of the Pope justly deserves our entire respect and protection. I hope that His Majesty will authorize you to present to His Holiness the compliments which respond to his high-minded conduct. - Finally the negotiations have been recognised and approved by the British Secretary of State ».

To Lord Grenville, the above mentioned Secretary of State, Mr Hippisley wrote a long account of what he had done and was doing in regard to the Holy See. The report is dated 26 December, 1793 and the most interesting portion of this document is

that in which it is shown how, in spite of the great scarcity of provisions in the Papal States, the Pope had done more than he promised in providing the English fleet with grain and meat. « Lord Hood, the admiral commanding », he says, « highly appreciates the help of the Holy See in this matter, and the value of the aid is doubled by the generous manner in which it has been accorded, at a time when there was such a great need of provisions in the country ». The amount of grain was more than was necessary to feed 24,000 men, on a ration of 23 ounces of bread per day, and this calculation did not include beans and vegetables, which were equally distributed between the English and Spanish forces.

The Pope was not less liberal in regard to meat; and this generosity, says Hippisley, « has given rise to great complaints among the people of his States. He has allowed us to have 500 oxen and the Spanish an equal number: 1000 sheep and 600 pigs as well as a great quantity of other provisos from Ancona. Moreover the Pope has furnished us with 40,000 quintals of powder from his factories, and all this at cost price ».

Mgr Erskine reached London on 13 November 1793. He had crossed to Margate from Ostend. Here he found that Hippisley's letters had prepared the way for his reception in a much more cordial way than he had expected. The Custom House officials at the landing stage had evidently been warned by the Government to receive him as a diplomatic personage, and the postillions on his way up to town, at every change of horses, took care to announce that he was « the Ambassador of the Pope ».

The first letter of Mgr Erskine to the Cardinal pro-Datary and the Cardinal Secretary, after reaching London is dated 22 November. Unfortunately he had found that many of the people, to whom he had brought letters of introduction, were away in the country and that he would have to await their return. Meanwhile Prince Augustus, whom he had already known in Italy, had heard of his arrival and had obligingly sent to express his regret at not being in London to receive him, but hoped to return soon to see him and to present him at Court. Erskine thanked His Royal Highness, but suggested that it would be

proper for him first to see the Ministers of State. He gave most people, he had met in the first days after his arrival, to understand that one object of his coming to England, was to pay a visit to his Scotch relatives. « I have been much encouraged », he concludes, « to see the admiration, respect and even reverence, with which every one here speaks of Our Sovereign Lord the Pope ». One of the newspapers *The Gazetteer* of the 21st November, he says, announced his arrival in the following terms: « He has come here on a Mission from the Pope. He is a native of Scotland, who has resided for a long time in Rome, where he has been known for his constant courtesy to his compatriots », etc.

Writing later, on 19 December, Erskine describes his reception by the people he had met, as most cordial. He had been informed that Mgr Douglas (the Vicar Apostolic) had tried to prevent his coming; but was unsuccessful. He finds that the three most important ministers are in favour of his Mission. Windham and Burke he has already seen and spoken to, and Stuart has written to tell him that he may be sure « of their entire cooperation », and of their good disposition towards his Mission to England.

At the end of the year (1793) Mgr Erskine went up to Scotland to visit his relations, and from Edinburgh he wrote, on 28 December, to Cardinal Campanelli that he was more than satisfied that his position as Envoy was fully recognised and safe. In every place where he had been received the greatest respect had been paid to him, as the Pope's representative. For example, he says: « I was at dinner in a company not large, but very select, and there amongst others was Lord Thurloe, the late Chancellor. He, having asked me what my official position in Rome was, I replied that I was the - Devil's Advocate, - at his service. Then according to the English custom there were toasts drunk. One of these was « to your *Padrone* », to which I added « the Pope », whereupon all joined with the words « to the Pope ».

In another letter from the same place, Erskine assures the Cardinal Secretary that the English Government fully understand the difficult position of the Holy See and the impossibility of send-

ing effective help to Toulon, or of raising a loan for the defence of that city, as proposed by Mr Jenkins. At the moment of writing, he says, there comes the news of the evacuation of Toulon by the English and the destruction of its arsenal by the French Republicans. This is here considered, he adds, not a bad thing, as it frees the allied fleet. Of Mr Hippisley's influence Erskine speaks very highly: « It is incredible how much and how often he writes, and to how many people ».

Parliament opened at Westminster on January 22, 1794 and Mgr Erskine returned from Scotland to be presented at Court by his relative Lord Kellie. He was also taken by him to a place near the throne in the House of Lords, to hear the King's speech on the opening of Parliament. Erskine informed the Cardinal Secretary of this in a letter, written from London on 17 February 1794, which conveyed the news that the English Government « intend to erect and endow a seminary for Irish Catholic priests, at a cost of 24,000 pounds sterling annually ».

To return once more to Mr Hippisley and his activities in Rome. On 19 January 1794, he forwarded to the Cardinal Secretary for the Pope's perusal, a copy of a letter received from Mr Windham. He explains that this powerful minister, directly he heard of the arrival of the papal Envoy, had come two hundred miles to welcome him to London. Windham had already on several occasions expressed to Lord Grenville and Mr Pitt his views as to the great importance of establishing relations between England and the Holy See. On meeting Erskine he had at once invited him to dine with him and meet the ministers accredited from other countries, and the reception of Erskine as the Pope's representative by all had been most cordial. Hippisley had been commissioned to convey to the minister the thanks of the Holy Father for his attitude; in reply to which Windham wrote:

« I wish I could find terms more expressive than those which come to my pen, to express how profoundly conscious I am of the high honour the Holy Father has deigned to show me and how much this mark of his condescension in my regard makes me wish for the honour and prosperity of his Government. I am proud at

being specially honoured by the regards of the Chief of Christianity and particularly by a Prince, whose sublime rank does not give a greater value to his approbation, than his personal qualities and virtues. I must ask you to choose the most respectful and proper means of conveying to His Holiness my homage and sincere sentiments towards him ».

In conveying this message to the Pope, Hippisley expresses his own great satisfaction in being able to lay at His Holiness' feet « a homage, which comes from a man, who is one of the most accomplished ornaments of the British Parliament, equally distinguished by his brilliant talents, his inflexible uprightness and who has become the favourite and even the idol of his nation ».

The Pope himself personally answered this letter of the English agent. He says that he is much touched by the affectionate expressions of Mr Windham, « a man of rare qualities in a variety of matters and whom we consider as such ». As to Mr Hippisley, the reception of Mgr Erskine in England, as the Papal Envoy himself declares, is certainly due to his good offices. « Equally with him », the Pope adds, « we acknowledge this with our thanks ».

The Holy Father then goes on to speak of the project, considered very important by the Holy See, of obtaining for the States of the Church the port of Antibes, should the Pope eventually regain possession of Avignon and Venaissin. He enters into long details as to this scheme: shows how important the port would be to Holy See and replies to objections to the proposal which Hippisley had already stated to the Cardinal Secretary of State. The Pope sets forth at some length the history of Antibes and concludes that it is not in any way necessary for French commerce, which has many other better harbours, but that for Avignon and Venaissin it would be invaluable.

A communication from Hippisley to the Cardinal, dated 18 February 1794, gives the news of the opening of the English Parliament. On the question whether the war should be continued, the voting in the House of Peers was 97 *for* and 12 *against*: in the Commons 277 voted in favour of war and 59 against. A motion

of Lord Stanhope for the recognition of the French Republic was rejected by the same majority. In this letter Hippisley encloses a printed official list of presentations made to the King. Amongst these was that of Mgr Erskine, described officially as « Envoy Extraordinary from His Holiness the Pope ». Erskine in his letter to Hippisley tells him that he was presented to the King on January 22, and on the following day to the Queen, by both of whom he was received with great cordiality.

Immediately afterwards the papal Envoy had a long conversation of five hours with Windham and Edmund Burke, and then in company of the latter he went to the Lord Chancellor and was there invited to dinner with all the diplomats. Erskine insisted upon the absolute necessity for the allied cause of defending Italy against the French, and upon the importance of having frank and open relations with the Pope. On this subject both Windham and Burke were in complete agreement with him. The latter, impressed by the reasons set forth by Mgr Erskine, told him that he would take the opportunity of setting forth the same points, in a full meeting of Parliament.

Lord Petre, chief of the English Roman Catholics, wrote at this time to Mr Hippisley, giving many details of the position of Catholic affairs, which the English agent in Rome promised to tell the Cardinal Secretary at their next interview. For the moment, he writes, all he desires to say is that Lord Petre speaks highly of the wise conduct of Mgr Erskine, and of the high esteem in which he is already held by the Ministers of the Crown. Hippisley concludes this communication by once more complaining of the attitude of certain ecclesiastics to the Mission, with which the Holy Father had entrusted Mgr Erskine.

A constant correspondence was kept up between the Cardinal Secretary or the pro-Datary, Cardinal Campanelli and Erskine. The latter writes of his interview with ministers, of his impressions and of his receptions by the highest personages in the Court and political circles. At one time he speaks of having attended the sessions of the Lords or Commons: at another (March 4, 1794) of having been present at the ~~condemnation~~ of Warren Hastings. *trial*

At the first King's levee after his arrival, Erskine met Pitt, who excused himself for not having been able, through pressure of business, to receive him before, but promised to do so at the earliest moment. He found time almost immediately after this, for Erskine in the same letter in which he had related the reception given him by the King and Queen and his chance meeting with Pitt, adds his account of his interview with the minister. This was both long and satisfactory. Pitt promised to safeguard the temporal interests of the Holy See as far as Great Britain was able to do so. He desired « to open up communications between the two Courts; but said that for an open correspondence he wished to have a time more propitious, and that at the moment it was necessary to proceed slowly, taking one step after another. Pitt then promised to answer the Cardinal Secretary of State, but wished to have another letter from him, in which no reference was made to Irish affairs. He said that the Ministers fully recognized the good intention of His Holiness in what he had done in this matter, but that in their opinion it was too delicate a point to touch upon, and therefore it would not be wise to express it in a letter, which would remain as an official document. For this reason he promised to reply, if another letter without the article on Ireland were sent.

« Finally he told me », says Erskine, « that the Emperor had proposed to constitute a defensive league of the Princes of Italy, and in case His Holiness were asked to join, he (Pitt) hoped I would let it be known that this was the wish of His Britannic Majesty and he hoped that His Holiness would assist, if not by arms and money, at least by his name and the influence of his sacred character ».

The new letter of the Cardinal to Lord Grenville, without the clause in regard to Ireland, according to the memorandum enclosed in the above, was to be written on the following points: « The object of the Mission was to thank the Government in the name of His Holiness, for the favours shown to the French *émigrés* and to the English Catholic subjects. His Holiness, to show his goodwill towards the English nation, was pleased to give

Mr Hippisley, a member of the British Parliament and British Consul in Rome, at his request, provisions of grain and meat for the use of the English fleet. For this the Holy Father had very willingly given orders, and in this matter as on other occasions Mr Hippisley has shown his zeal and patriotic spirit, which did him much honour.

« Likewise His Holiness had commissioned Mr Hippisley to convey his thanks to Lord Hood, the British Admiral, for the courteous messages he had commissioned Mr Hippisley to make in his name.

« Of all these facts and of the feelings of His Holiness my Lord (Grenville) may be fully informed by Mgr Erskine, and that His Eminence (the Cardinal Secretary) hopes that this exchange of good offices may be considered as the dawn of an agreement between the two States, too long alienated, whilst it would seem to be in the interest of the subjects of both (and as he hopes that it be the wishes of their sovereigns) to live in friendly relations, under the sanction of the laws ».

Towards the end of May 1794, Mgr Erskine was occupied in treating with the English Government - that is to say, with Lord Grenville - some ecclesiastical difficulties, which had arisen in the island of Corsica, then in the possession of the English. Sir Gilbert Elliot, afterwards Lord Minto, had for a brief time been Civil Commissioner at Toulon. On the evacuation of that port by the English on 20 November 1793, he was appointed to the same office in Corsica, when, with the consent of the inhabitants, the British assumed the protectorate of the island in May 1794. The Roman ecclesiastical authorities had information that the French, when holding possession of the island had changed the old system of Church government. They had suppressed Episcopal Sees, closed religious houses, etc., and appointed a Bishop to rule, according to their republican ideas. When it became known that the English were to take over the Government, Erskine was directed by the Cardinal Secretary of State to present to Lord Grenville a memorial setting forth these circumstances and pointing out to him the danger of supporting the new form of

religious government as introduced by the French. This he did, accompanying the memorial by a letter to the Minister on 20 April 1794.

The Cardinal Secretary replied to the letter of Mgr Erskine in regard to his interview with Pitt and the suggested revision of the letter of credence, on 5 April of this year. He said that he would at once send the new letter for Lord Grenville, with the clause to which objection had been made, omitted. As to the proposed defensive league of Italian princes, he says that the documents already sent will have shown that « none of the Princes in Italy would have been more prompt to send to Milan to treat of such a league than the Pope, but that the plain fact was that; no notices whatever so far had been sent out, and none of the other Princes in Italy had been asked about the matter. None of these rulers however appear to take much interest in the question; but the Holy Father will do what lies in him should the subject be seriously mooted. He is ready to do what Mr Pitt suggests, namely assist it if not with men and money, at least with his name and the influence of his sacred character ».

A news-letter from a Mr Udney, the English Consul at Leghorn, to Mr Hippisley, dated 14 March 1794, is interesting as giving news of the British attack on Corsica. « General Dundas arrived here », he writes, « last night to my great surprise. Lord Hood is determined to take Bastia at any cost, but at the moment he has too few troops, and rain and snow have prevented operations up to the present. I hope that Admiral Parker, with the vessels and frigates he commands, will prevent any help coming from Toulon to Calvi, and that he will intercept the vessels of war, which were to have left Tunis last week...

« Captain Welson commanding the *Agamemnon*, writes to me from Bastia that on the 12th he examined all the French positions, some of which are very strong though not impregnable. Bad weather has not yet allowed him to direct the fire of his vessel against a battery, which is on the north of the city, which must be destroyed as it serves to keep the Corsican army from the point. Fifteen hundred Corsicans, without the need of using canon, hold

the French and prevent them from making any progress in the country ».

On the same subject Sir William Hamilton, British Minister at Naples, writes to Mr Hippisley on 5th of April. « My letters from Lord Hood tell me that he is going to attack Bastia, though the opinion of General d'Auban was against it. In consequence his success will chiefly depend on marines and sailors. He needs many things we have furnished in 24 hours from the Arsenal at Naples and Gaeta. The *Romney*, an English man of war leaves this morning with all we have supplied. Unfortunately the Jacobin conspiracy here prevents troops being sent ». This memorandum was immediately sent by Mr Hippisley for the information of the Holy Father.

On 7 May 1794, Hippisley wrote to Sir Gilbert Elliot on behalf of the Cardinal Secretary to introduce a Roman ecclesiastic, Mgr Albani, brother of the Prince Albani and nephew of the Cardinal. Mgr Albani had been appointed to represent the Pope at any Congress which might be held at Milan to consider the very critical state of affairs in Italy. The English agent adds at the end of letter: « I thank God that I was the first to bring about open communications between this Government and ours, after relations had been so long interrupted. Some time ago I sent you a copy of the letter of Lord Grenville to Mgr Erskine. His Excellency has likewise assured this Prelate that he would write directly to the Secretary of State in reply to a letter he had lately received ».

On the 20th of this same month, Hippisley reported to Cardinal De Zelada the reception of a letter from Erskine, written on the 29th of April. In it he says that « he had that moment received Your Eminence's letter to Lord Grenville, and at the same time he gives me the pleasing intelligence that on the motion of Mr Fox the Catholics were freed in the session of 28th of April, from the obligation of taking the oath, which hitherto prevented their giving their votes at the election of member of Parliament. This measure was passed unanimously ». « I have also », continues Hippisley, « had letters from two members of Parliament, who say that the

presence of Mgr Erskine and the honourable reception which he has had from all parties, have directly contributed to facilitate the passing of this important measure, as also that which was passed some months back to discharge the Catholics from the double tax. Mgr Erskine's modesty would probably prevent him from speaking of this; but as to me it is impossible not to give this prelate the praise that is due to him. One of the members of Parliament, who have written to me, noted that the King, the Queen and all the Royal family have shown extraordinary kindnesses to Mgr Erskine; and the Prelate, having had the honour of reading to the Queen Your Eminence's letter on the reception of our troops at Civitavecchia, Her Majesty had manifested the greatest pleasure... Here, Monseigneur (Cardinal) is a fresh occasion, very pleasing to me, to present my humble congratulations to His Holiness and his worthy minister upon the happy progress of an affair, which they have conducted with such wisdom ». Enclosed in this letter is a memorandum of the conditions of the treaty made by Great Britain, Holland and Prussia, which were proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Pitt, and agreed to by Parliament on the 28th April 1794. Prussia was to be paid 300,000 pounds to put an army of 62,000 men in marching order, and an additional 100,000 when it was ready to take the field. The annual payment for these troops by England would be 1,400,000 pounds sterling.

In the same month the indefatigable Mr Hippisley, after saying that he had sent all the documents concerning the English regiment actually at Civitavecchia, adds an extract from a recent communication received from Mgr Erskine, dated 7 March. The Monsignor writes: « I have just come from Mr Windham. Having spoken of the object of the Mission he said that he hoped that I should not soon be recalled. Lord Carnarvon, the Duke of Leeds and the Lord Chancellor have said the same thing to me. Last night I was at a great party, at the Minister of Portugal, and when the Prince of Wales came into the salon I was talking to the Minister of Vienna. Seeing me, he did me the honour of coming towards me. He asked news of His Holiness and congratulated

me on my promotion.¹ On my saying to him that I feared that this might accelerate my return, he was pleased to answer that - this must not be too soon, and then he added: You will be a Cardinal; certainly you will be a Cardinal. - I replied that I had already received so much from His Holiness that there was nothing I might not hope from his goodness to me, though I had done nothing to deserve it. The Prince replied: Without doubt you will be a Cardinal, and I shall be glad to see you one.

« I did not say anything to my friend the Cardinal (Campbell) about this part of my conversation in my letter to him.

« The Prince continued to talk for a long time to me and in the most affable and gracious way. The following day, at Lady Campbell's, he himself presented me to his friend Mrs Fitzherbert. He also introduced me to Lord Clermont, saying that he was his great friend and the Gentleman of the Chamber. In naming me he said: - Mr Erskine, who came here on the Pope's behalf. - To say the truth, I find I am received and treated by everyone as the Envoy of His Holiness ».

The affairs of Corsica were again the subject of conversations between the Cardinal Secretary of State and Mr Hippisley in the May of this year, 1794. On the 28th the latter writes saying that it was now determined that the island should be under the protection of England and the Government be in the hands of a council, with General Paoli at its head. The various questions regarding clergy « will be in good hands and the Roman authorities have a friend in the person of Sir Gilbert Elliot ».

On 6 June 1794, Hippisley communicated to the Cardinal Secretary that he had just heard from London that the Bill for giving the vote to Catholics, had been suspended till the next session of Parliament. The measure had passed the first two readings unanimously, but when it came up for the third reading, it was observed by some one that the times were too critical to make so important a change. « Mr Burke and many other

¹ Erskine was made *Uditore* of the Pope in the Secret Concistory, 21 February 1794.

members spoke in favour of the Bill, but Mr Pitt, who had also voted for the measure at the first two readings, thought that it had better be suspended ».

The fact was, as Hippisley told the Cardinal: « Great alarm had been spread over the Kingdom by the discovery of a conspiracy of two secret societies, which occupied the whole attention of the ministers and Parliament », and was the reason for holding up this measure of justice to Catholics as also another proposal to be made by Mr Sheridan to admit Catholics to the army.

« I », continues Hippisley, « would point out to Your Eminence that no one in the Chamber spoke against the *principle* of the Bill, or its substance, which would certainly have passed with unanimity had it not been for the alarm caused by the discovered conspiracy ».

During the month of June, the Cardinal was furnished with extracts of many letters which gave accounts of the sailing of the French fleet from Toulon for the relief of Corsica; of the pursuit of Lord Hood; and also of several engagements between the forces. On the 15th, news came from Leghorn that 9 French ships of the line, 6 frigates with 5000 men for the proposed landing at Calvi were blockaded in the Bay of Santa Margherita by an English fleet of 15 ships of the line and 10 frigates.

On the 17th of June a communication of another kind reached the British agent in Rome. On that day Sir William Hamilton, the Minister at Naples, wrote about an eruption of Vesuvius which had taken place the previous Sunday. It had shaken the city to its foundations, the lava had run down the mountain to a distance of four miles and had almost entirely overwhelmed Torre del Greco. « It is feared that a great part of the inhabitants have been buried alive under the ruins. I saw this morning a stream of lava, which had formed a new promontory to the sea and the water was so hot that at a distance of 400 paces, I could not hold my hand in it: a little nearer it was evidently boiling. At this moment we are in a dense mist and the continual noise of the mountain threatens fresh disasters. If this explosion of lava had not taken place the city of Naples would have been buried in an earthquake ».

In sending this account to Cardinal Campanelli Hippisley reminds him that Sir William Hamilton « is the great authority on Vesuvius and for thirty one years has been engaged upon the scientific examination of its eruptions ».

A letter dated 22 June 1794, from Hippisley, informs the Cardinal that Mr Windham, according to the *Official Gazette* of London, is about to become a Minister of State in the place of Mr Dundas, who had occupied the post only for a time. In the same communication he encloses the draft of a history of the sufferings of the French clergy, by the Abbé Barruel,¹ which is being translated into English. In his Preface the Abbé says: « By a wonderful effect of Providence the French clergy have been the happy cause of drawing together the Holy See and England which for more than two centuries had had no sort of communication ».

The conduct of that portion of the clergy, who had found refuge in England, and the enthusiasm which had inspired that generous nation, the Catholic religion better understood by seeing the reality before their eyes by a people who were prejudiced against it and finally, the interest that they took in the persons who had fled to them and whom they helped: all tended to lead to the point where they stand to-day, where the attitude of the people towards the Court of Rome is very different to that which led up to the scenes witnessed in 1780.

« The truly magnanimous way in which the Court and all classes of the British nation has acted towards these ecclesiastics was quickly brought to the attention of the Common Father of the Faithful. Various Briefs and Letters in which were expressed the feeling of his heart and the greatness of his soul addressed to Ministers, Admirals and other English officials, were the first steps taken by His Holiness to manifest his gratitude and paternal concern for everything which could contribute to the relief of both the French Catholics and their brethren of England ».

¹ *Histoire du clergé de France.*

« Fortunately », continues the memorandum of the Abbé Baruel, « there was at this time in Rome a member of the British Parliament, endowed with great activity and full of resource. He interested himself actively in the lot of the French *émigrés* and did not weary by letters, notes and example to influence the general movement in their favour. Respected by the chief members of the committee formed for the help of the *émigrés*, an intimate friend of the President of the Committee, the worthy recipient of the confidence of his Government as well as honoured by the goodness of the Holy Father and the friendship of his Ministers, Mr Hippisley became the centre of the correspondence, which was established between the benefactors of the French clergy.

« In this way the barriers were broken and the dividing wall, that had so long separated Rome from London, was, if not wholly overthrown, at least passed over without difficulty, a mutual confidence was established and the two powers came to understand that they had one object of mutual interest ».

In a short time Hippisley found himself asked on the one side to assure the Holy Father of the constant protection that would be given to his States by the English fleet, to ask from the Pope favours, which were to be expected from a friendly power, and to lay at his feet the expression of the thanks and admiration of the chief officials military and civil, as well as of other illustrious personages of his nation. On the other hand, the English agent became in regard to his own countrymen, the interpreter of the lively appreciation of the Holy Father for all that the English Court and Nation had done for the emigrant clergy and for the Catholics of England, and to assure them of the Pope's desire to do all he could in return. « These and like sentiments and methods of action served to immortalize Pius VI, who rising above strong existing prejudices has secured the veneration and (if it may be said) the tender regard of a people so long hostile to Rome ».

The writer then goes on to speak of the great work of conciliation already affected by Mgr Erskine in breaking down preju-

dices and forming friendships. But, he adds, « even this is due to the constant care of Mr Hippisley ».

At this time the English Catholic residents in Rome presented Hippisley with an address of thanks for all he had done to bring about cordial relations between the Holy See and the English Government. « We have seen », they say, « the great Pius VI generously give all that his States could provide in the way of provisions for the British fleet, and this at a time of great scarcity in the country; and we have equally witnessed the testimony of lively gratitude and recognition to the Court of Rome by those who commanded the forces for His Majesty. We have seen again a regiment of English dragoons received with distinct honours in the States of His Holiness and for three months treated with the most friendly care. You, Sir, (i. e. Hippisley) were chosen to be the channel through which His Holiness has deigned to convey to our fellow countrymen the gracious testimony of his satisfaction at their excellent conduct, and in the name of the Holy Father to present a gold medal to each of the officers. It was very pleasing to observe that by a happy chance this regiment had the name of his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and that its two chief commanders, General Stuart and Colonel Erskine, are relations of your own and of the respected Uditore of His Holiness, Mgr Erskine, your intimate friend for many years and at present your companion in the great cause in which you are concerned ».

« We have heard with the greatest joy of the honourable welcome given to this Prelate in England by the Royal family and the Ministers, and our hearts are filled with thanksgiving as we have heard that since his arrival in England a Bill has been carried for the relief of our Catholic brethren, relieving them from the double tax imposed on them, and that another Bill to restore to them the great privilege of voting at the elections, which is much prized by every Englishman, has been proposed and only delayed by certain circumstances ».

The writers of this memorial then go on to express their belief that the laws against the Catholics were wholly unjust, because they were made to apply to a body ever faithful to their

King. Equally unjust they consider the hatred of the Holy See, manifested in many of the English laws.

« A simple and exact statement of the principles, inculcated by the Sacred Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* in all its letters and admonitions to the Catholic subjects of His Majesty, are sufficient to prove that it is unjust to draw general conclusions for any isolated fact and to confound the action of the *Court* of Rome in purely political matters two centuries back, with the constant teaching and discipline of our Church. Faithful obedience to established Government and respectful submission to those invested with authority are the necessary rules of conduct, which have been most warmly inculcated ».

The memorialists conclude by asking Mr Hippisley to believe they are sincerely grateful for all he has done to bring about a better understanding between the Minister of the English Sovereign and the Pope and his Ministers.

The signatures to this document are interesting. They are Rev. Val. Bodkin, Doctor in Theology and Laws and agent for the Bishops and secular clergy of Ireland; the Rev. I. Weyburn, Professor of Theology and Superior of the Irish Franciscans in Rome, in the name of all the community; Rev. I. Connolly, Doct. of Theology and Superior of the Irish Dominicans in Rome in the name of the whole community; the Rev. P. Macpherson agent of the Bishops and clergy of Scotland; Rev. F. Luke Concanen, Doctor of the College of Casanate (*sic*) and secretary of the General of the Dominicans, and agent of the Archbishops of Ireland in Rome; the Rev. P. Crane, Prof. of Theology and Rector of the Irish Augustinians in Rome, in the name of all the community; the Rev. R. Smelt, agent of the Bishops and clergy of England; G. Harris, student in the English College in the name of all the students; J. H. Mac-Dermont student in the Irish College in the name of all the students; J. Maclaughlan, student in the Scots' College in the name of all the students; Rev. J. Connel, Secretary of Cardinal Rinuccini and agent of the English College at Liège; Rev. N. Thompson, Canon Regular of the Redemption of Captives in his name and in that of Rev. B. Murphy; J. Macdonald, student in

the College of Propaganda Fide, in his name and in that of all the British students of the College.

On 23rd of June 1794, Hippisley appeals to the Cardinal Secretary of State to obtain more provisions for Lord Hood. This was done at the request of Mr Udney, the British agent at Leghorn, who had heard that the Pope had allowed General Erskine to have 200 beasts for the army. « Lord Hood will be greatly disappointed in his hopes, if on his return to Leghorn he does not find fresh provisions for his deserving sailors. Lord Hood presses me in his letters to secure these, and I feel sure His Holiness will consider how much the security of Italy depends upon these brave and good men of the British Navy ».

On the 1st of July, Mgr Erskine writes about a visit to Portsmouth to witness the King's review of Lord Howe's fleet. « It was a sight worth seeing », he says, « especially the launch of a new ship, and the salute of all the ships, as the King passed down the line. It gave one the idea of a battle, at least as some of the officials told me, but in the proportion of one to three. On Saturday I was on board the Admiral's ship *Queen Charlotte*, where I was shown everything. I remained late so as to hear from a ship the effect of a cannonade, but an accident, difficult to believe, did not let me hear this. The King with the Queen and the Royal Princesses had gone for a sail on the frigate *Eagle*. With him were Lord Howe and all the chief officers of the fleet; but on the point of the Isle of Wight the frigate ran on a shoal and remained there till 10 o'clock at night, and since no salute is fired after sunset, I did not have the effect I hoped for.

« The Cardinal Secretary of State's letter about the English soldiers in Italy and about the gold medal the Pope had given to the officers I have presented to Lord Grenville and a copy to Lord Amherst, Commander in Chief of the Army ». The replies sent (now not in private but officially) « show that we may consider the correspondence between the two Courts opened ». In Lord Grenville's letter there is a special point to remark: « after my name there are three ecceteras, as is usual in the case of ministers ». Erskine says in the same letter that he is doing all in his

power to heal the divisions among Catholics. He has persuaded Lord Petre to go and visit Mgr Douglas, with whom he has not had relations for a long period, and Throckmorton has promised him to stop writing his pamphlets.

In the middle of the month (July) Mgr Erskine went to visit Oxford and was loud in his praises of all he saw. He was well received everywhere and invited to dine at Christchurch founded by Cardinal Wolsey. « I accepted », he writes, « so as to be the first - at least I think so - of my character, who has dined there since the fall of the Founder ». The Monsignore was also pleased to find that at Oxford there was a chapel, or rather a little church, being built for the Catholics, which was nearly finished. He praises the priest, a certain Mr Casley, by whose energy the money has been got together, and he suggests that to encourage him the Cardinal Secretary might be disposed to get some help from the Holy Father for the work.

In his next letter (July 22) Erskine speaks of the campaign in the Opposition press against the Ministry. The *Morning Chronicle* has attacked, not the person of the Pope but the Papacy in general, « and last Saturday it maintained that this war was being waged to uphold the tottering Papacy; that the King of France had lost his crown and his life because he allowed himself to be seduced by papal agents, etc.; that it was contrary to the nature of a Protestant nation (England) and contrary to its ideas of liberty and religion to prop up Rome ». It was an article intended to inflame the passions of the people, as Lord George Gordon had done in 1780. Fortunately it produced no ill effect; but at this time great prudence was evidently necessary. Meanwhile he had been able, he says, to converse at length with the ministers as to Corsica.

In subsequent letters the British Envoy returns to the Corsican question and says that he has the assurance of the Minister, at last, that the spiritual government shall be settled in accordance with the views of the Holy See.

A letter from Cardinal Campanelli to Mgr Erskine begins by saying « this morning (5 July 1794) the Holy Father said: - Write

to Mgr Erskine, and in my name tell him that he is worthy of all praise for having given the news of the signal naval victory gained by Admiral Lord Howe - ».

In writing to Hippisley on behalf of the Cardinal Secretary, Cardinal Campanelli says that he - the Secretary of State - had written a letter to Lord Hood and accompanied it with a present of a copy of the *Museo Pio-Clementino*, as Hippisley had suggested. He adds that the Pope is not at all content with the proposed Constitution for Corsica, especially in regard to its religious clauses, which are modelled upon the Civil Constitution for the French clergy. He begs Mr Hippisley to insist with the English Government upon this being changed, which as just noted, had already been done.

On the 30th of June of this year, Lord Hood writes from on board the *Victory* to quiet the alarms which had arisen from a report of the escape of some French vessels from Toulon. A copy of this note was immediately sent to the Pope. « As I hear », writes Hood, « that all Italy is alarmed about a second division of vessels of Toulon, I am pleased to assure you that these reports are unfounded, and I have the honour to tell you that on the 18th the French only had one guardship in the port of Toulon, and this was absolutely unfit to take to sea. So that it is impossible that they could send out five vessels, not even in five months' time. I thought that this notice would be welcome and for this reason I send it expressly for the information of His Holiness ».

With this letter Hippisley sent the Cardinal Secretary an extract from the *Histoire du Clergé de France* by the Abbé Barruel. It was the expression of the gratitude of the 8000 priests, who had taken refuge from the revolution in England, for the wonderful charity with which they had been received. A printed copy of an inscription to commemorate this charity, which had been placed in 1793 in the Chapel of the King's House, Winchester, is still folded in this letter.

In the July of 1794, Mr Hippisley went on business to Ancona. He was to make a tour of inspection of the country, so as to be able to report on the natural resources of the Papal States to the

British Government. He sought and obtained from the Cardinal Secretary of State letters containing every requisite permission. He appears to have been specially interested in the production of hemp, which he thought could be increased greatly in this part of Italy. In writing to Rome, he suggested that the port of Ancona required considerable attention, since, even after great sums of money had been spent on it by the Pope, it was in no ways improved. He suggested that, as at Genoa, where things were going from bad to worse until the authorities got an English engineer to study the question, so at Ancona it would be most useful to obtain the same opinion before it was too late, and he mentions that like difficulties had been experienced at Ramsgate and that these had been entirely overcome.

From Ancona Hippisley forwarded a note he had received from Lord Hood written on board the *Victory*, giving the following information: « I have left Vice Admiral Hotham, with a superior force, to hold the blockade of the French squadron, so that the States of Italy need not have any fear of an attack. Through bodily fatigue and anxiety of mind I find my constitution so undermined that I am incapable of continuing to command His Majesty's fleet in these waters and I must ask for leave to return to England. What is most annoying to me is that I am deprived of the honour of presenting my respects personally to the Pope. No one can have a deeper veneration for His Holiness than I have ». In communicating this note to the Cardinal Secretary, Hippisley notes that Lord Hood had on six or seven occasions directly sent news of interest or importance to the Holy Father.

At the beginning of August of this same year, 1794, Hippisley, still writing from Ancona, sends to the Cardinal a copy of a letter from France, giving a sad account of the state of the country then in the reign of terror under Robespierre. He again returns to the question of Corsica, saying that he thinks it would be difficult for the English Government to take any active part in ecclesiastical affairs. « In every conquered country », he says, « where the people are Roman Catholic, the English have always left the Church conditions in the same form, in which they found them.

Your Eminence will remember that Lord Hood, speaking of Bastia, where the English flag had been raised, authorized me to tell you that the establishments of the Church would not be touched. If as conquerors we had taken the entire island this would have been our policy. Now, however, that the country has determined to come under the protection of England, it is not so easy, in view of the Convocation of the Assembly of free Corsicans, to enforce absolutely what the Holy See desires ». Hippisley nevertheless is sure that the views of Sir Gilbert Elliot and of Mr Burke are the same as those of the Pope, and he strongly urges that in any letters on the subject there should be quotations made from the works of Edmund Burke on the Revolution, which had become a classic. He advises that together with any Briefs of the Holy Father on this matter, a printed selection of passages from the works should be sent. For this purpose he forwards an Italian translation of the first work and a French edition of the second.

To Mr Windham Hippisley had written, that apparently some in England are rejoicing at the chance of a schism in Corsica, as having some relation to a general change of religion in that island; but that he (Windham) was too well informed about the history of our country and about mankind generally to imagine that, once the Corsicans had broken their relations with the Holy See on a question of dogma, they could be considered as being good Protestants.

In replying to Hippisley's letters, the Cardinal Secretary thanks him for his advice regarding the best way to manage the difficult question of Corsica. This advice the Holy Father will take. He will base his reasons against the ecclesiastical changes on the Briefs he has issued against the French changes and he proposes to make great use of Mr Burke's arguments taken from the books which he thanks Mr Hippisley heartily for having sent. The Cardinal thanks him also for what he has written about the port of Ancona and the Holy Father is by no means averse to obtaining the advice of the celebrated Mr Smeaton, who has been so successful in the case of the port of Ramsgate.

On 3 October 1794, Mgr Erskine wrote to the Cardinal Secretary to tell him that the English Government did not see its way to interfere actively in the religious questions of Corsica. It was suggested that the Holy See should come to some arrangement with the Corsicans and the British Government would back it up. With this letter Erskine forwards the official reply of Lord Grenville to the Cardinal's letter. He also acknowledges the reception of copies of the Pope's Bull condemning the Synod of Pistoia, one of which he will give to Mgr Douglas.

A month previously - on 8 September - Cardinal Campanelli had written to Mgr Erskine expressing the Holy Father's pleasure at hearing his account of the good dispositions of the English Government in regard to the innovations in prejudice of religion, proposed by the Corsicans, and their action against priests and religious. He begs Mgr Erskine to insist upon the return of the legitimate priests to the island, as their absence is very hurtful. The Pope, he continues, was much interested in your account of the long talk you had with the Duke of Portland, and the Holy Father desires to thank him and the King for their sentiments in regard to « the Catholic religion in the Kingdom, in the conquered islands, and in that of Corsica ». He has every confidence that they will oppose all novelties in that State, which came in merely as republican innovations. Now « as to the change that for just reasons is now to be made in regard to the Visitor Apostolic of the conquered islands, the Holy Father is always desirous, as far as possible to meet the wishes of the Government. He approves the agreement wisely made by the Duke and you, and will wait for the note on the various proposed people, in order to choose the most fitting. In this way it is hoped to open the way for future relations with advantage and honour to both Courts.

« For your private information I may say that of the three people named by the Duke, that is to say, the Bishops of Amiens, Boulogne and Troyes, according to our present information the first would be the best. I would add for your own instruction that it would be well not to use the term *nominate*, which is not the correct expression to use even for Catholic Princes, when speaking

of a Vicar Apostolic or other ecclesiastical minister to be appointed by the Holy See. The term *suggestion, request* or *information* is more appropriate, and would equally satisfy the Government. This is the just remark of the Holy Father himself, which I pass on to you, whilst at the same time in his name I give you the highest praise for the wise way in which you have conducted all your business and in particular the conversation referred to ».

At the beginning of October, Hippisley was able to send some satisfactory news about the Corsican business. He had received a letter from Sir Gilbert Elliot in which he says that the Constitution now proposed simply declares « that all matters (with regard to Bishops' sees, parishes, etc.) are to be agreed upon between the Corsican Parliament and the Pope », and he believes that nothing prejudicial to religion will be attempted. He adds: « If the communication between the two Courts (of Rome and England) was recognized by the law, the case would be essentially different, and when this happy consummation is effected, then will be the time for the Court of Rome to consider how directly and officially to expose all it has to say upon the temporal rights of the Holy See in Corsica ».

Meanwhile the only way open is for Mgr Erskine to ask for a conference on the matter with Lord Grenville. « Possibly having been warned as to the object of the interview, his Lordship may have a difficulty in granting such a meeting, but the request will be sufficient to show the anxiety of His Holiness ».

Together with this letter Hippisley encloses a copy of another note received from Lord Hood, written from « On board the *Victory*, anchored in the port of Spezia ». He desires to thank Cardinal De Zelada for his letter and the present he has sent him in the Pope's name.

« This present (valuable as it is in itself) I consider not so much for its value, as a pledge of the friendship and esteem of a virtuous Sovereign ». He adds that he has now received permission to depart for England for a short time, and hopes to recover his health in « passing a few weeks at the baths of Bath ».

On November 11 (1794) Mgr Erskine wrote a long letter to the Cardinal, which is of exceptional interest as showing the relations which then existed between him and the British Government. A portion of this letter may be here translated. He writes: « Not contented with the reply I received through Mgr Douglas, whom I had sent to His Excellency the Duke of Portland, Secretary of State for Home affairs, so as to give him (Douglas) the opportunity of seeing him for the first time, I determined to go yesterday myself to the Duke. I had a long conversation with him, and a very satisfactory one on the present matter with hopes of even greater satisfaction in the future. I told him, without making any mystery about it, that the faculties for Mgr de Cominges had arrived; that His Holiness, sincerely desiring to second the wishes of the Court here, had determined to carry out this matter at once. That for this reason the faculties had come sooner than I expected, and that as I did not wish to have any difficulty as to the mission of Mgr de Cominges, for this reason I had taken the step (believing that the Pope would approve of this under the circumstances) of not handing the faculties to the Bishop, until I had assured myself that no objection would be raised... Mgr Douglas had, after his interview, told me that there was in fact some objection. For this reason I had come to ask His Excellency if possible to communicate to me the ground of the objection, so that I might be in a position to explain the matter to the Holy See. The Duke replied that he was most sensible and so was His Majesty of the friendly anxiety of His Holiness to second the just wishes of His Majesty. He thanked me for having suspended the issuing of the faculties, since in this way I had freed them from an embarrassing situation, which should not have arisen. He begged me to make his excuses to His Holiness for this change, but he hoped that in view of the reasons, the Holy Father would excuse him; adding that His Holiness might be assured of the uprightness of their intentions and of their desire that the Catholic Religion should be maintained pure and intact in the British dominions. A proof of this was to be found in this very change now under discussion. Here in substance he told me openly, that having thought of sending an ecclesiastical dignit-

ary to bring order, or rather to renew the spirit of the Catholic religion in the conquered islands, he was directed to Mgr de St Pol, and Mgr de Cominges was proposed by him for the office. The first time the latter was presented to him he had shown by a certain haughty behaviour that he was not adapted for so important and difficult a duty, for which he was destined, and that, having afterwards obtained information, his suspicion that Mgr de Cominges was not the person was confirmed. For such a Work there was needed, he said, a zealous and exemplary man and, in a word, an Apostolic ecclesiastic. He had consequently told the Prelate so; and having learnt that the Bishop's family had many relations in the islands, he had come to the conclusion that his presence there would be a subject of jealousy for one or other of the parties, and that instead of resulting in securing the spiritual good it would cause difficulties both spiritual and temporal. Furthermore, that as one part of his present diocese was in Spain, it would be a delicate matter to send him to the islands, without coming to some agreement with the Court of Spain, which under the circumstances was not possible ».

With regard to his own position, Mgr Erskine says that he was disposed to tell Mgr de Cominges that the faculties had arrived, since he will have already heard directly from his friends in Rome, but to say that he (Mgr Erskine) had not yet had any orders to hand them to him. « From this affair I came to the conclusion that it was necessary to induce the Government here, when they have to treat of other *nomine*, not to propose any name before they have ascertained the views of the Holy See. I consequently said to the Duke, continues Erskine, that it was always difficult to have either well founded or impartial information; and that since the wish of His Majesty and his own was to provide for the preservation of the Catholic religion by means of good Pastors, I begged him to reflect if the best method for securing this would not be to have an understanding with the Holy See, which was always interested solely in the choice of good subjects, and since it was the centre, etc., was naturally better informed of the character and the merits of everyone. I told him the present case showed that it was

necessary to have good information before acting, and how useful was this suggestion of mine ».

« I also begged him to think of what might be an even more difficult case. Supposing, - I said - that His Holiness had any canonical objection against the person of Mgr de Cominges, or against some other person nominated by His Majesty. In such an eventuality His Holiness could not grant the faculties requested, and then what would happen? This Government would not wish and could not oblige His Holiness to act against his conscience. Would it perhaps send the person nominated or permit him to go without his faculties? Here there would be things contradictory in themselves. Does it not therefore follow that such a nomination would be useless and that it would be necessary to proceed to the choice of another subject? To avoid these and similar inconveniences, I drew the conclusion that it would be always proper, and I would even say necessary, to agree with Rome (previously) on the person to be nominated ».

« The Duke entered most reasonably into all I had said and told me that we must agree together on the choice of a new subject. He named the Bishop of Boulogne-sur-Mer, that of Amiens and that of Troyes. I said that as to this I could not say anything without the determination of the Holy Father and I hope that he will send me the list, so that I may forward it for the Pope's final decision ».

After this the talk passed on to the subject of Corsica and on this the Minister said « that His Holiness might be assured that here as elsewhere the Court would take every measure necessary to preserve the Catholic Religion, such as it was before the introduction of the fatal French innovations. He told me that the patent for the nomination of Sir Gilbert Elliot as Viceroy in Corsica, had just been forwarded to him ».

Mr Hippisley left Italy in 1796. For some time he had been in bad health and had been obliged to make use of the services of his daughter in his correspondence. Meanwhile Mgr Erskine continued to correspond regularly with the Cardinal Secretary of State. The Revolution was no longer confined to France and war

was kindled in Piedmont, Austria, Spain and England. In May 1795, it was rumoured that the allied Powers contemplated calling a Congress to discuss the possibility of a general peace, and the Pope determined to take timely measures to have a representative in such a Congress to uphold the rights of the Catholic Religion and in defence of the Papal States already invaded at Avignon and Venaissin. Pius VI chose Erskine as his representative, and the official appointment was sent to him on June 6, 1795.

Although, in consequence of disagreements among the allied Powers, this proposed Congress never took place, the credentials addressed to Mgr Erskine gave him a position as Envoy Extraordinary, which was most useful to him. In June of this same year (1795) the Society of Antiquaries in London forwarded to His Holiness a copy of a volume on *Roman Military Antiquities* compiled by the Society, and Pius VI wrote to Erskine to convey his thanks to the Society. In this same letter the Pope expresses his sense of loss at the death of Cardinal Campanelli, Erskine's true friend and constant correspondent.

« It is unnecessary », writes Mezière Brady,¹ « to enter into details of the French occupation of Rome and the brutal violence practised on the person of Pius VI, who rashly consented to the treaty of Tolentino, made under compulsion, on the 19th of February 1797. Previously to that time the Pope had been violently stripped of the greater part of his dominions and was virtually a prisoner, soon to become one in dread reality, and he was helpless before Bonaparte.

The events of the sad years 1796, 1797 threw additional labours upon the shoulders of Erskine. As Great Britain had more open intercourse with foreign parts, London became a centre of correspondence between Erskine and the Papal Nuncios in Madrid, Lisbon, Vienna, the Rhine and Holland. He wrote frequent despatches to Monsignors Casoni, Pacca, Ruffo, Della Ganga and Brancadoro. His Vienna depatches were sent sometimes through

¹ *Memoirs of Cardinal Erskine*, pag. 139.

the hands of Marchese de Circelli, Neapolitan Minister at London, and sometimes through Mr Canning, then Under Secretary of State; and very often in these roundabout ways he contrived to send letters to Rome and the Pope, as also to the Papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Giuseppe Doria.

On 16 March 1798, Pope Pius VI wrote a long letter to Mgr Erskine from Siena, which is of pathetic interest, and deserves to be read in its entirety. After thanking the Monsignore for the present of a service of English table linen and some razors, the Holy Father continues: « We have said that we received your kind present in this place of *exile*, because the French force compelled Us to decamp from Rome, declaring that the civil Government belonged to the people. The first step which the French took at the opening of the Revolution was to burn Us in effigy, in Paris. Next they possessed themselves of Avignon and Venaissin, and then they seized the three provinces of Bologna, Ferrara and the Romagna, and, piece by piece, they took all the rest, so that of all our Sovereignty nothing remains to Us save the memory. The war, for them so fortunate, is a war against Religion, for they perpetrated a thousand sacriligious outrages against the Church - as the late Bishop of Spire wrote to Us - against the priests and friars, confiscating their property. And this was the system which they have always pursued, and still continue to pursue in Rome. They found out a pretended excuse in the circumstance that General Duphôt was killed by Our civil troops; but his death was in consequence of his own attempt to force their quarters and disperse them. They resisted, as was their duty, and in the confusion shots were fired, and a bullet happened to kill the General. This is the undeniable truth, as results from the Process instituted by Our Secretary of State. But they have determined to colour all their iniquities by this pretext, in order to carry into execution the plan they had concerted beforehand, which was to impose intolerable contributions, to quarter their soldiers by compulsion, forcing poor families, who could scarcely feed themselves, to entertain officers, soldiers and horses. Several prelates were arrested in Castel S. Angelo and sent to the Convent of the Convertite, in the Borgo, as hostages for

six or seven Cardinals who are to be banished - they say - to Sicily, and have already been sent to Civitavecchia. If maltreatment had been offered to the French, there might be excuse for them, but in reality every attention and consideration was shewn them.

« Before entering Rome they gave assurances in writing that the form of Government would not be changed; but at their very first ingress, they insisted that the keys of the City gates and of Castel S. Angelo should be consigned to them. Before Our forced departure, they placed guards within the innermost rooms of Our apartment, put seals on Our presses, and carried away everything there was of any value. They despoiled the Vatican of its most precious monuments, such as statues, pictures and codices; and they did the same in many private houses, notwithstanding their declaration that all property would be safe.

« We Ourselves determined not to leave Our residence - whatever might be the cost - taking into consideration Our age, over eighty years, Our state of convalescence after a malady of the duration of two years and a half, which took away the use of Our feet. But it was not possible for Us to obtain the favour of remaining, as they threatened to make Us leave the Palace by force, so that we were obliged to drink the bitter cup and to go out from Our States, and retire, as they ordered, to the dominions of Tuscany. Could greater barbarity be shown? On leaving the Palace, which was before day, we found at the foot of the grand staircase an escort of seventy Dragoons and two Commissaries. The Commissaries accompanied Us all the way here to Siena, though the guards on horseback were dismissed at the end of the first stage.

« Now although We quite understand that in London you cannot bring to the front religious motives, yet such motives when they involve questions of Sovereignty and the rights of nations, must make a strong impression. And for the same reason We, being personally known to the Emperor of Russia, have written a Brief to him, imploring his aid under the present most bitter circumstances, and We doubt not that he, albeit a schismatic, will

take to heart Our unfortunate situation. And therefore Your Lorship must employ means to secure that in the Congress, which must be held for peace either in Rastadt or elsewhere, restitution shall be made to Us of the States which were violently taken from Us, beginning with Avignon and Venaissin. It is a thing certain and not disputed that what is gained in an unjust war must be restored and cannot pass into the dominion of the unjust possessor. A war more unjust than that of the French against the Holy See cannot be imagined; wherefore We have most just of titles to claim back all that has been taken from Us. He who shall be destined to act for Us in the quality of Our Commissary for Great Britain, must make himself Our Advocate and put forward the aforementioned erasons of the spoil and sackage committed against Us without the smallest cause of complaint. We leave this business to whom are not wanting activity and eloquence.

« On the evening of the seventh of this month seven Cardinals were carried to Civitavecchia for transportation to Sicily or, as some say, to Portugal. We shall wait and see what other acts of hostility they will perpetrate.

« From Siena, the Church of the Assumption, the 16 of March 1798 ». ¹

This letter of Pius VI, when Erskine had made it known in England, moved the King and his Ministers to try and think of some means to help the unfortunate Pontiff. In a letter of the Cardinal Dean to Lord Nelson and also in one from Lord Grenville, written on 18 December 1798, mention is made of a project to try and liberate His Holiness from his place of detention, which was then the Certosa of Florence. It was thought that the French at the time were hampered for want of troops, as in an intercepted letter Bonaparte speaks of the necessity of keeping 200,000 men on the Rhine. The project, whatever it was, came to nothing, but may have been the one reason why the Holy Father was removed to Valence where he succumbed to his sufferings and hardships on 29 August 1799.

¹ Translated in *Memoirs of Card. Erskine*, pp. 140-142.

Meanwhile the events in Rome added greatly to Mgr Erskine's work in England. On the suppression of the Congregation of Propaganda by the French, Cardinal Borgia the Pro-Prefect, managed to find a refuge in Padua, then in the possession of the Austrians, and in this way Erskine was able to communicate with him and assist him in the transmission of letters through England. The blow to Propaganda and the Oriental and National Colleges in Rome threatened to be fatal to the missions. Erskine laboured strenuously to remedy the evil by opening up a correspondence with missionaries in all parts of the world. Practically, Cardinal Borgia and he at this time transacted the entire business of Propaganda, and as the French had seized all its revenues, Monsignor Erskine collected and administered very large funds for these missions, and subsequently gave an exact account of his receipts and disbursements.

By the French occupation of Rome Mgr Erskine lost all his revenues as Uditore and as Papal Envoy and got very little from his canonry of St Peter's, owing to the enormous forced contributions imposed by the new masters of the eternal city. It is of interest to record that King George III, on realising the situation, provisionally pensioned the Monsignore, whilst the occupation of the Papal States continued.

During the closing months of 1799, Erskine constantly shows his anxiety about the conclave, which was finally assembled at Venice, for the election of a successor to the late Pius VI. As his death under such unparalleled sufferings and persecutions had excited great compassion and emotion in England Erskine determined to celebrate a public Requiem for his soul. This was carried out in the Church of St Patrick, Soho, on November 16, 1799 with all possible solemnity.

Cardinal Consalvi became Secretary of the Conclave, which began on 1 December, and several communications passed between him and Mgr Erskine. In one, written from London on 17 December, the Monsignore was able to give him the news that a yearly allowance had been made by the English Government to the Cardinal Duke of York. In another of 2 February, 1800, he tells the

Cardinal that he had explained at length to Lord Grenville the state of the Pontifical territory and of the Eternal City on which His Lordship had declared « that it was the wish of the British Government that everything should be restored to what it was before the violent and unjust aggression of the French ».

Cardinal Chiaramonti was elected Pope on 14 March 1800, and took the name of Pius VII. It was not, however, till the 4th of April that Lord Grenville was able to communicate the news to Erskine, who immediately wrote to Cardinal Consalvi to offer his homage to the new Pontiff and at the same time to beg that his recall might be considered. He finds, he says, his health suffering from the climate of England. Meanwhile a letter from Consalvi crossed his, and he found himself reappointed and a new cypher for his official correspondence communicated to him. So Erskine continued to write his despatches, which were for the most part forwarded by Mr Canning, the Under Secretary, and the couriers of Lords Grenville and Minto.

On 14 April 1800, the Monsignore sends a long letter on a matter which had been communicated to him by the British Government. It seems that the Austrians were putting great pressure upon the new Pope to place himself entirely under their protection. An Austrian Cardinal had been urging this very strongly, but the opinion in London was, that there would be a great danger to the Pope in this, as once the Austrians set their feet in Rome it would be no easy matter to get them out again. In this same letter Erskine says that it has been difficult to see Lord Grenville as he and the other Ministers have been wholly occupied in a project for the Union of England and Ireland, under one form of Government.

On the 22nd of the month the Monsignore announces that the above named Union was carried in the Commons by a great majority of votes. He adds that yesterday he assisted at St Patrick's Church, Soho, at a *Te Deum* for the election of His Holiness Pius VII. Eight days later Lord Grenville himself wrote to Cardinal Consalvi, thanking him for letting him hear of the election of the new Pontiff. He is glad, he says, to be assured in His Emin-

ence's letter « that His Holiness is actuated by the same principles and possesses the same character as His illustrious predecessor, so eminent for his public and private virtues. Conduct of affairs, founded on such principles, cannot but secure the continuance of that friendship and those good relations, which so happily existed between Great Britain and the Papal State during the time of the late Pontificate. Your Excellency may be sure that this Government of His Majesty will ever have the most sincere desire to cultivate these sentiments ».

Pope Pius VII left Venice on his return to Rome on June 6, 1800, and entered the Eternal city on the third of the following month. The French, owing to the advance of troops from Naples, had withdrawn, and on the 17 of July, a letter written by Mr Penrose, the British agent in Florence, had given some assurance of English help in case of need. « In consequence », he says, « of your application I am empowered to assure you in Lord Keith's name, that if any danger should be incurred to the Pope's person from an irruption of the French into Roman territory, His Lordship will use every exertion for stationing a vessel of war, whether at Civitavecchia or Gaeta, for the security of a sovereign in amity with His Majesty ».

On Sir John Hippisley's departure, Mr Thomas Jackson, the British plenipotentiary to the Court of the King of Sardinia, took over the duties of English agent at Rome. At first his chief occupation was endeavouring to protect English shipping and trade in the ports, etc., of the Pontifical States, since the French, in their advance into the Papal territory, were already putting extreme pressure on the Pope to expel all the English from them.

When Pius VII returned to Rome many questions were raised about the pillage of works of art from the public museums and private palaces which had gone on during the French occupation. On July 21, 1800, for example, Mgr Erskine wrote that he had received a claim from Mgr Albani regarding precious pictures and statues belonging to his family. The claimant asserted that they had been seized first by the French and then left behind, when the Neapolitan troops /the capital. On his demand to these latter

for their restitution, the authorities declared that the English under Sir Thomas Trowbridge had taken these works of art as their share of the plunder. Mgr Erskine, whilst expressing his disbelief of this accusation, promised to lay the matter before the English Ministers. This he did, and on August 12th he was able to report the result of their enquiries. He enclosed a long letter from Lord Grenville and another from Lord Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty. The latter forwarded a reply from Sir Thomas Trowbridge, indignantly denying the charge that the English had plundered any property whatsoever in Rome, according to the complaint of the Duke Braschi and Mgr Albani.

At this same time many complaints were made by the Roman authorities of the way in which the law, prohibiting the exportation of works of antiquity and art from Rome, was being evaded. Erskine, who was written to on the subject, replied that the English Government were fully aware of this traffic, and of the methods taken by the dealers to conceal their violation of the law. He mentions a case in which « the celebrated painting of St Gregory by Annibale Carracci » had been prepared for exportation by coating it with gum, over which when dry a poor modern figure of the Archangel S. Michael had been painted. The English authorities were willing to do what they could, but there would seem to be need of more care in Rome itself.

Many requests were also being made for permission to export antiquities. In one case the artist and art dealer, Robert Fagan, then living in the Eternal city, asked to be allowed to send to England an antique statue of Venus « more beautiful than any other known except perhaps the Venus of Medici and so considered by Canova »; a Mercury, almost equally fine, and other antiques. These had, according to Fagan, been purchased by the Prince of Wales from him. The permission was withheld for a time, as the estimate of their value for the payment of the tax differed very considerably. Fagan had valued them at less than half what the Government valuer, Avv. Carlo Fea, had put upon them. What happened to them is not clear from the documents that exist.

To return to the Erskine correspondence. On 9 January 1801, he reports that Lord Nelson is leaving Portsmouth and that his destination is probably the Mediterranean, and that as a league has been formed by Russia, Denmark and Sweden to resist the British claim of a « right of search » of neutral vessels, Nelson will probably have instructions to attack Russian vessels in the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

Mgr Erskine was one of the fourteen Cardinals reserved *in petto* in the Consistory of 23 February 1801. He, however, begged that his nomination should not be made public, whilst he remained in England; but George III and Pitt were informed of it and cordially congratulated the Monsignore. The King jokingly asked him at his next audience, why he had not come in his new robes!

Erskine expected to quit London in May, but was delayed by business till some months later. The Concordat between the Pope and the First Consul had been negotiated in September 1800 in Paris, and on 5 June 1801, Consalvi left Rome to conclude it. It was signed by him as Plenipotentiary of the Holy See on 3 July of that year. By its second article the Pope undertook to rearrange the boundaries, etc., of the French dioceses: and by the third article to invite the Bishops to resign their sees. In England there were residing at this time three Archbishops and sixteen Bishops¹ and to Mgr Erskine was left the task of confronting these difficulties. On 13 October 1801, the Envoy wrote from London that he had received the Briefs, by which the Holy Father invited the French Bishops to resign their sees into his hands. He anticipates bother as there had been long meetings of the prelates concerned with the Archbishop of Narbonne, and, as he hears, the only Ecclesiastics who have upheld the necessity of obedience to the voice of the Holy Father are the Archbishops of Aix and Bordeaux and the Bishops of Lescar and Cominges.

Erskine accompanied a copy of the Brief with a letter to each of the Bishops in which he says: « The Pope has not omitted to

¹ These were: The Archbishops of Narbonne, Aix and Bordeaux, the Bishops of Lescar, Arras, Montpellier, Angoulême, Nantes, Noyon, S. Pol de Leon, Uzeu, Périgueux, Cominges, Lombez, Vannes, Moulins, Audez, Troyes and Avranche.

practise every possible endeavour to preserve to Your Lordship your See, but had experienced most profound regret in finding your resignation, in these urgent circumstances, indispensably required for the good of the Church and her unity, and for peace and the re-establishment in France of the Catholic Religion. His Holiness has charged me to assure your Lordship, that he has in every possible way recommended you to the First Consul, whom he has asked to keep you in view in his nominations to the new dioceses and at least to provide for your subsistence. And such is the anxiety of the Pope to contribute in every possible way to the relief of your Lordship, that he will not omit any favourable conjuncture for alleviating the burden of your situation and helping your personal needs ».

During this same year Erskine keeps Cardinal Consalvi acquainted with the news in England. He speaks of the King's illness; the ministerial crisis on which Pitt, Grenville, Dundas Spencer and Windham had resigned. It is supposed, he says, that Addington - the Speaker of the House of Commons - will take Pitt's place as head of the Government. In September the Monsignore speaks of the great excitement in England at the prospect of an invasion, and says that Nelson is going to make an examination of the French forces at Boulogne.

To return to Rome. On February 18, 1801, Mr Jackson complains to the Cardinal Secretary of State about the seizure of a British ship *The Naples Packet* in the port of Civitavecchia and he prays for the Cardinal's protection. In the same month there were rumours of the French again advancing under General Murat. If this were true it might be necessary for the English to depart. As the Cardinal had told him, he says, that « the French demand that all English retire from the States of His Holiness », he begs the Cardinal « in that event to employ your good offices to procure me an exemption from an order of this kind, assuring you that it would be a true service done to me, especially as my delicate health would not allow me to take a journey in this season without danger ».

In the year 1803, Jackson obtains audiences for Lord Elgin returning from his embassy at Constantinople and his secretary

Mr Hunt. In June General Stuart was in Rome on his way to England and was intending to pass through the Papal States and embark at Ancona. Rumours, however, were in circulation that the French troops were already in possession of that part of the papal territory and Mr Jackson asks in confidence the Cardinal's advice, which he is sure will be dictated « by the affectionate regards of His Holiness and his own for the English nation ».

The same month an incident occurred at Porto d'Anzio, which called for the warm thanks of the British agent. The French had seized an English vessel in that harbour and the Pope at once demanded and obtained its freedom. Mr Jackson is sure that this act « will be greatly pleasing to the Government of His Majesty and that at the same time it will induce all the British Commanders to observe, on their side, the strict neutrality of the ecclesiastical ports ». On the fourth of July, Jackson again thanks the Cardinal Secretary « for the promptitude with which he has insisted upon the surrender of the ship and of the English flag ». He adds: « I take this occasion of informing your Eminence that in a letter I have received from Lord Nelson, dated 25 June, his Excellency has great satisfaction at the news of the neutrality of the States of His Holiness ».

Mr Jackson remained at his post till the Pope left Rome in 1805 to crown Napoleon at Paris. In March of that year, in a letter to the Cardinal Secretary, he refers to the departure. « I suppose », he says, « that nothing is changed as to what the Holy Father said in his last letter, that his leaving was fixed for the middle of March... I desire most ardently to see the Holy Father return to His States to enjoy a peaceful and a happy life ».

In November Mr Jackson prepared for his own departure. The rumoured landing of British and Russian troops at Naples would, he foresees, cause movements among the French troops, which would make his stay impossible. He writes to the Cardinal Secretary in the hope that in conformity with « the constant attention and goodness he had always shown him » he will not forget to give him timely warning of the march of the French troops on Rome or any other point in the Pontifical States. The assembly

of a *corps d'armée*, which, according to reports, is taking place in Tuscany, together with the troops already at Ancona, may possibly be with this object.

Two letters of 1806 to Cardinal Consalvi complete the existing dossier of letters from Mr Jackson as English agent. The first is dated 26 February. In it he writes: « In the cruel circumstances in which I find myself I cannot refrain from bringing to Your Eminence's knowledge the two following facts:

« Monsieur Cacault, before leaving Rome, after the declaration of hostilities, asked me to give him a passport for his effects, etc., which he wished to send from Leghorn to Marseilles. Not only did I at once give him mine; but I gave him a letter addressed to the British Commanders asking them to allow these things, the property of a Minister returning to France, to pass. I also on my responsibility asked the Consul General at Leghorn to do the same.

« Since the arrival of His Eminence Cardinal Fesch in Rome, a Frenchman presented himself at my house, coming from Paris, where he said he was one of the chiefs of a plot against the Government. I interrupted him at this point, observing to him that he knew very little of England and the English; that although unfortunately we were at war, I could assure him on our side, we would carry it on loyally, and that consequently I never wished to hear propositions of this kind as they were so entirely opposed to the principles of my Government as also to mine. I ended by warning him never again to come to my house or I should be obliged to close my door against him. He has never shewn himself again.

« Such a way of acting, Monseigneur, deserves a return very different to what I experience at this moment and should at least procure for me the possibility to attend to the orders of my Court in Rome and in the Ecclesiastical States, and in case of departure, obtain for me facilities from the French Ministers.

« However, I assure your Eminence that the liberal conduct I have pursued in regard to the French (which has always been guided by the wish to diminish as far as possible the inevitable miseries of war) is a matter of great consolation to me in my pre-

sent situation, as also the remembrance of your Eminence's goodness and my feelings of eternal gratitude to His Holiness ».

On 13 March of this year, 1806, Mr Jackson writes from Trieste, saying that he had arrived safely there the day before. « I shall never forget the care you have taken », he adds, « to secure my leaving Rome in circumstances so critical and difficult. I feel that it is to you, Monseigneur, that I owe the security of my journey and the liberty and independence I am now enjoying here. I must not omit to thank your Eminence for your recommendation to Mons. the Auditor Leonardi, who took every trouble imaginable to allow of my embarking at Pesaro ».

This practically ends the documents regarding the diplomatic relations of England and Rome at this period. In the year which followed the departure of Mr Jackson, the British agent (1807), nearly all the papers in the present dossier refer to the numerous attempts made by the Cardinal Secretary to defend English property in the Pontifical States from the French officials. A decree of Napoleon, issued from Berlin on 21 November 1806, forbade the introduction of English merchandise into the Papal States or the exportation of grain of any kind. Two officials of the Pope were appointed to visit every ship which entered the ports and were required to certify that no English goods were on board. In conformity with this decree visits were made by the French to storehouses and shops of traders on the Adriatic and Mediterranean. The Papal Government did not in the least acknowledge the right of the French to institute such enquiries, still less to proceed to the confiscation of any such goods, maintaining that the Holy See was neutral. The Pontifical officials did all in their power to prevent or delay such visits, and as a fact, though these searches were made, it does not appear that they led to the discovery or confiscation of much English property. At any rate these papers make it evident that even in the absence of any British agent from Rome, the Papal officials still continued to safeguard English interests as far as they could, during the oppressive rule of the French in their second occupation of the States of the Church.

EPILOGUE

It may be of interest to the reader to learn what happened to Mgr Erskine and Sir John Coxe Hippisley, after the conclusion of their respective missions in England and Rome.

Mgr Erskine prepared to leave England in December 1801. There was nothing further to delay him in the country, and as he had been created Cardinal ¹ by the Pope, he was anxious to get away. Cardinal Caprara had been in Paris since October, acting as *legate a latere* to sign the Concordat, which had been negotiated between the Pope and the existing French Government, of which Bonaparte was now First Consul. A preliminary peace had already been concluded between the allies and France, and it had been agreed to hold a congress at Amiens to settle the terms of a general peace for Europe. So Erskine left London on 12 December 1801, travelling with an English passport, which described him as «late Legate from His Holiness at this Court». He reached Paris a week later, and was present at the official proclamation of the Concordat. For one reason or another, he remained there for more than eight months, and only left, on 29 August 1802, to continue his journey to Rome, which he reached in October 1802. On January 17, 1803, he was declared Cardinal deacon, with the title of S. Maria in Campitelli, which had been formerly held by the Cardinal Duke of York, his patron and early benefactor. Whilst he remained in the Eternal City, Cardinal Erskine was able to serve English interests in many ways, and was the means of securing the property and rights of the Scots College, of which he had been in early days a student.

¹ Reserved *in petto*.

At this time Cardinal Erskine was still only a subdeacon; but in 1804 he received deacon's orders. The situation of the Pope in Rome was by no means secure, and it quickly appeared that the Emperor Napoleon had no intention of allowing him any freedom of action. By threats he compelled the Pontiff to comply with his wishes, and to adopt a full French policy. Finally Napoleon determined to proceed further, and to either make the Pope a mere cipher to carry out his will in all matters civil or ecclesiastical, or to deprive him of his temporal power altogether. Accordingly, on 13 February 1806, he set forth his determination in a document couched in clear and even harsh language, and on 2 March, Cardinal Fesch presented a note to the Holy Father in milder language, but to the same effect. In these documents the Pope was told to break off all relations with other European powers, to shut his ports against Russian, Swedish and English ships, and to expel all the English from Rome and the Pontifical States. In these critical circumstances, Pius VII called together all the Cardinals in Rome, and was supported by their advice in refusing to submit to such demands.

Events after this moved very quickly. The French troops were already in possession of Ancona, and in 1806 they occupied all the harbours of the Pontifical States. On 1 November 1807, the French General Lemerrois proclaimed himself Governor of the provinces of Ancona, Macerata, Fermo and Urbino. By a decree of Napoleon, 2 April 1808, all these Pontifical States were declared united to the Kingdom of Italy. Rome itself had already been occupied on 2 February of this year, 1808, by General Miollis, who planted cannon against the gates of the Quirinal palace. In this month and March, fourteen Cardinals were forced to depart from Rome, and later on in the year, others were seized and deported. For a time Cardinal Erskine shared the Pope's captivity in the Quirinal, until on the night of 5 July 1809 the Holy Father was seized by French soldiers, and carried away as a prisoner. Erskine was then allowed to return, not to his own apartments in the Capranica palace, but to a palace in the Via di Aracoeli, once the abode of Cardinal De Zelada.

On 8 December 1809, Erskine received peremptory orders from General Radet to the effect that the Emperor Napoleon directed that he should leave within twenty hour for Paris. The Cardinal was ill, and did not at once obey; but pressure was exercised, and at last on 2 January he was obliged to leave Rome, and reached Paris on 26 January 1810.¹ For a time his health seemed to improve, but in the first days of 1811, he received « a terrible shock by the arrest of Mgr De Gregorio, Father Fontana, and Cardinals Gabrielli, Opizzoni and De Pietro, who were all shut up in prison in the Donjon of Vincennes ». At the end of February, he had a second stroke, and died on 20 March 1811. He was buried at the same time as Cardinal Vincenti, who had died on the same day, in the Church of S. Genevieve, Paris. A circle of white marble under the cupola of his titular Church of S. Maria in Campitelli, Rome, records his death.

Mr Hippisley on returning to England, was created a baronet in 1796. He continued during his life to interest himself in all Catholic matters, frequently corresponding with Cardinals and other friends he had made in Rome. It was through letters addressed to him by Cardinal Borgia that the pecuniary distress of the last of the Stuarts, Henry Benedict Cardinal Duke of York, was first brought to the notice of King George III, and was relieved by a pension from him. On his death the Cardinal of York left several mementoes of his gratitude of his friend Sir John Coxe Hippisley. Whilst a member of the House of Commons, Sir John always strenuously supported full Catholic Emancipation. He retired from Parliament in 1819, but continued to write much in favour of the claims of Catholics in Ireland and in England to justice. He corresponded frequently with Cardinal Consalvi, Secretary of State to Pius VII, of whose abilities he had the highest opinion, and whose friendship he much prized.

¹ For an interesting account of this journey, see MEZIERE, *Brady's Memoirs*, pp. 233-258.

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